



OFFICE OF EMERGENCY  
SERVICES  
Summer 2008

\* make a plan \* build a kit \* be prepared \* get involved \*



## The Impact of Heat Waves

Heat waves do not cause damage or elicit the immediate response of floods, fires, earthquakes, or other more "typical" disaster scenarios. While heat waves are obviously less dramatic they are potentially more deadly. According to the California State Office of Emergency Services website ([www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov)), the worst single heat wave event in California occurred in Southern California in 1955, when an eight-day heat wave resulted in 946 deaths.

The website also states that heat emergencies have claimed more lives over the past 16 years than all other declared disaster events combined. The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake resulted in 63 deaths; the 1994 Northridge earthquake was responsible for the loss of 55 lives; and the catastrophic 2003 Southern California Firestorms resulted in 24 deaths. While typical summer temperatures in California contribute to the untimely demise of 20 people on average per year, the heat wave experienced by California in July 2006 caused the death of at least 140 people over a 13-day period.

Heat emergencies are often slower to develop, taking several days of continuous, oppressive heat before a significant or quantifiable impact is seen. Heat waves do

not strike victims immediately, but rather their cumulative effects slowly take the lives of vulnerable populations.

So how can you protect yourself during a heat wave? Some recommendations from the Santa Clara County Public Health Department's *Fact Sheet on Heat-Related Illness* include drinking plenty of non-carbonated liquids, such as water; limiting fluid loss by avoiding alcohol, caffeine, and sugar; wearing lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing, such as cotton, so sweat can evaporate more easily; and checking on older adults, infants and young children frequently to make sure they are hydrated and cool.



## San José's Cooling Centers

The City of San José experienced a series of extremely hot weather during the week of May 14 - 16, and again on June 20th and 21st, when temperatures reached over 100 degrees in some areas. Such high temperatures can be dangerous for the very young and elderly, so

the City, through its Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department, opened up 10 cooling centers throughout San José. Besides providing relief from the heat, these centers offered drinking water, light snacks, and comfortable places for San José residents to rest. Kudos go out to Dave Peyton and the rest of the PRNS staff for their efforts in making sure residents were kept safe.



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### DID YOU KNOW?

The City of San José boasts an average of more than 300 sunny days per year.

### San José Prepared! **LEADERSHIP FORUM**

Are you:

- A 20-hour San José Prepared! graduate?
- A leader in a Neighborhood Association or other Community Organization?
- A volunteer instructor or interested in teaching for San José Prepared!?

Then please join us for dinner and conversation!

**September 24, 2008  
6 pm to 8 pm  
San José City Hall**

Please **RSVP** by  
**September 10, 2008**  
(408) 277-4598  
or email

[SJPrepared@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:SJPrepared@sanjoseca.gov)

## Vietnamese and Chinese Home and Family Disaster Preparedness

Earlier this year, San José Prepared! launched its Spanish Home and Family Disaster Preparedness Course. A few weeks later, Vietnamese and Chinese versions of the course were presented at the Catholic Charities' John XXIII location. Saman Saffarzadeh, a Training Specialist with the Office of Emergency Services, was pleasantly surprised by this unanticipated event. According to Saman, the original plan was for him to conduct an English version of the course to a group of no more than 15 participants. However, when he arrived at the location, he was greeted by over 75 attendees, most of whom spoke little to no English. With the help of on-site

translators, Saman conducted the training to an audience of 60 Vietnamese-speaking and 15 Chinese-speaking participants. "I was expecting a class of 15 English speaking participants and was amazed when I realized that the 75 in attendance were non-English speaking. The Staff at Catholic Charities were amazing and provided on-the-spot Chinese and Vietnamese translation for our course. The audience was extremely interested in the course material and we were engaged in discussion the entire time. By far, it was one of the most entertaining classes I have been a part of."



Saman Saffarzadeh prepares to teach his class.



## Name This Newsletter!

We are looking for your help in finding a name for our quarterly newsletter. Although San José Prepared! is a great name in itself, we want our newsletter to have its own name that is equally recognizable.

So put on your thinking caps and give us some ideas! Be as witty and creative as you can. This contest is open to all City of San José residents and the winning name will be chosen by staff members from the Office of Emergency Services.

One entry per person. Email your entry to [SJPrepared@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:SJPrepared@sanjoseca.gov). All entries must be submitted by July 31, 2008.

The winner will receive a disaster preparedness backpack and have his or her name and photo published in the next edition of the newsletter. Good luck!

## Summertime Safety Tips

Summer has arrived! Keep in mind these tips, especially if you are planning on spending a lot of time outdoors during the next few months:

**Ozone:** in the upper atmosphere, this naturally occurring gas protects us from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation. However, ground level ozone that is produced by from pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, refineries, and other sources is a primary component of a chemical soup known as "smog." Smog can be particularly high in the summer. Limit strenuous outdoor activities as much as possible when the air quality index (AQI) reports unhealthy levels. Radio and television weather broadcasts will usually announce when the outside air is bad, especially during times when

*From the US Environmental Protection Agency*

"Spare the Air" days are declared.

**The UV Index:** this tool provides a daily forecast of the expected risk of overexposure to the sun. The Index predicts UV intensity levels on a scale of <2 to 11+, where <2 indicates a low risk of overexposure, and 11+ means an extreme risk. It is a good idea to limit outdoor activities between 10 am and 4pm, especially when the UV Index is "high," "very high," or "extreme." Remember to use sunscreen with a SPF of at least 15, and seek shade whenever possible.

**Health Effects:** Overexposure to UV radiation can cause sunburns now, but also can lead to skin cancer, cataracts, and premature aging of the skin. Ozone can cause coughing, throat



A view from Alum Rock Park overlooking The City of San José.

irritation, and pain when taking a deep breath. It also can reduce lung function, inflame the linings of the lungs, and even trigger asthma attacks the day after ozone levels are high. Repeated inflammation over time may permanently scar lung tissue.





*City of San José OES Director Kim Shunk and Training Specialist Alvin Galang with Irma Puentes from Santa Clara County OES and her husband Richard Puentes at the Volunteer Center's Human Race Event on May 10, 2008.*



*Training Specialist Saman Saffarzadeh answering questions from participants during a 2-Hour Home and Family Disaster Preparedness course conducted on April 15, 2008 at the Alma Senior Center.*



*Training Specialist Saman Saffarzadeh standing guard at the information booth at the Berryessa Art and Wine Festival on May 10, 2008.*



*San José Prepared! Intern Yolanda Aguirre teaching a 2-Hour Home and Family Disaster Preparedness course at the Great Oaks Neighborhood Association meeting on June 19, 2008.*



*The Storm Spotter Training session presented by Matt Mehle from the National Weather Service at San José City Hall on June 18, 2008.*



*Training Specialist Alvin Galang demonstrating a Head-to-Toe Assessment at The Villages Golf and Country Club on March 17, 2008.*



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where you can also find the **electronic version**  
of the newsletter!



## What is RAWS?

Nestled high within the foothills in Alum Rock Park lies RAWS. The San José **R**emote **A**utomatic **W**eather **S**tation collects data, which aids the Fire Department in predicting fire behavior. This data can be used to monitor environmental conditions on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Some of the data include wind speed and direction, precipitation, barometric pressure, soil moisture, and air temperature/relative humidity. There are over 2,000 RAWS strategically located throughout the United States. These stations provide weather data that assist land management agencies with a variety of projects such as monitoring air quality, rating fire danger, and providing information for research applications. Recently, the information from RAWS was extremely valuable during the second week in June, as the City dealt with fire weather that eventually led to a red flag warning. The data gave the Fire Department the information it needed in their decision to augment their normal staffing levels in case of an emergency. Other organizations and agencies such as CAL FIRE and the National Weather Service also use the RAWS data to track conditions. Since there had not been good weather information from the eastern side of Santa Clara Valley in the past, they were excited to have access to this information. In addition, Fire Communications now broadcasts the RAWS weather conditions three times a day when San José is under a red flag warning.

For more information, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/raWS/>



*This publication can be made available upon request in alternate formats, such as, Braille, large print, audio recording or accessible electronic format.*

*Requests can be made by calling 408-277-4595 or 408-294-9337*

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